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Review of physical activity promotion policy development and legislation in European Union Member States

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-53171>

Published Research Report

Published Version

Originally published at:

Middelbeek, L; Kahlmeier, Sonja (2010). Review of physical activity promotion policy development and legislation in European Union Member States. Copenhagen, Denmark: World Health Organization.

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Abstract

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Keywords:

PHYSICAL FITNESS

MOTOR ACTIVITY

OBESITY - prevention and control

HEALTH PROMOTION - methods

HEALTH POLICY - legislation and jurisprudence

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List of abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

DG SANCO	Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (EC)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HEPA	Health-Enhancing Physical Activity
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
THE PEP	Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgements

This review is a deliverable of work package 2 of the three-year collaborative project between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) of the European Commission (EC), which began in January 2008 (2007WHO02) under the title *"Monitoring progress on improving nutrition and physical activity and preventing obesity in the European Union (EU)"*. WHO would like to express sincere appreciation to the National Information Focal Points that were nominated for the project, the WHO Nutrition Counterparts, and other country informants that completed the two country reporting templates and provided the relevant information and physical activity promotion policy documents (see Annex 1). Without their continual collaboration, the compilation of policy documents would not have been possible. Grateful thanks are extended to Lideke Middelbeek, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen and Sonja Kahlmeier, Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine, Zurich for writing the review, to Trudy Wijnhoven for her comments, technical input and overall coordination, to Philippe Roux, DG SANCO, Luxembourg City for his feedback, to Sally Charnley and Susana Fernandez Tordrup, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen for administrative support, to Lars Møller, Møller and Kompagni for the layout and typesetting, and to Frank Theakston for the text editing.

Introduction

The importance of physical activity for health has been well documented. Evidence shows that physical activity reduces the risk of certain chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes type 2, cancer, overweight and obesity, and improves musculoskeletal health and psychological well-being (1,2).

Sports promotion has a long history in many countries (3), yet examples of comprehensive national strategies for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity date only from the past few years. The growing interest of Member States in developing policies and strategies on physical activity may be partly related to the processes involved in the preparation and endorsement of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health in 2004 (4) and the focus on physical activity during the WHO European Ministerial Conference on



Counteracting Obesity in 2006 (5). Physical activity was included on the agenda of the 2006 WHO European Ministerial Conference with a presentation of the publication *Steps to health: a European framework to promote physical activity for health* (6). The importance of physical activity for tackling the obesity epidemic was also underlined in the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity (7).

In the history of public health successes, policy interventions have often played a major role. Their potential to affect large numbers of people underscores the need for increased emphasis on policy development, also in the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) (8). Formulating a national HEPA policy will give support, coherence and visibility at the political level and, at the same time, make it possible for the institutions involved – such as national government sectors, regions or local authorities, stakeholders and the private sector – to be coherent and consistent in their actions by following common objectives and common strategies, as well as to negotiate and assign roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, development of a policy may lead to greater allocation of resources and greater accountability and, if legally binding, such a policy serves to commit countries to implement actions (9).

Aim of this review

The main purpose of this review is to evaluate the progress made by the 27 EU Member States in developing and issuing physical activity promotion policies and legislation in this area. An overview of policy and legislative documents is provided, including information on their coverage, the issuing body and the targeted sector. The report also includes a paragraph on the existence of a specific national coordinating mechanism in the area of physical activity promotion.

Methodology for document collection

In the framework of this project, policy documents were defined as written documents that contain strategies and priorities, define goals and objectives, and were issued by part of the public administration (3,10).

A first collection of national policy documents on physical activity promotion, with the aim of developing a WHO European online database, was undertaken in 2006 (11). A combination of methods was employed, including Internet-based searches of documents on the web sites of national ministries of health, transport, environment, education, culture, youth and sports; of health promotion agencies such as national and international agencies; of local and subnational initiatives (as available); and of other relevant projects and activities promoting physical activity, such as Bicycle Policy Audit and Walk 21 congresses (12,13). Furthermore, a search was conducted on the Google search engine using the following keywords: physical activity, HEPA, health enhancing physical activity, physical activity promotion, policy, guideline(s), strategy, programmes, action plan and national programme.

In addition, documents from Member States received by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (Rome office), findings from the WHO Member States National Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Questionnaire (2005) and documents prepared for the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity held in Istanbul in 2006 were reviewed. In June 2006, an overview of the results of the search findings up to this date was distributed (14), together with a call for further contributions to around 100 counterparts of HEPA Europe as well as the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) (15).

Additional information on existing policy documents was received through a questionnaire sent in May 2007 to the 53 WHO Nutrition Counterparts in the European Member States as a follow-up to the 2006 WHO European Ministerial Conference. Along with the questionnaire, a list of earlier identified obesity, nutrition and physical activity policy documents was sent to them for correction and the addition of new documents. A total of 34 countries (of which 22 were EU Member States) responded by sending back the questionnaire and/or the attached list of national policy documents. Of these, 33 countries completed the questionnaire, while one country sent only the annexed list of policy documents back; nine countries completed both.

As part of the joint WHO/EC monitoring project, the 27 National Information Focal Points completed two country reporting templates and were requested to provide information on policy documents aimed at counteracting obesity, including those focusing on the promotion of healthy nutrition and/or physical activity. With the outcome of this reporting exercise, the above-mentioned collection rounds were updated and an overview is given in this report.

Overview of national physical activity promotion policies

Table 1 provides an overview of national policy documents identified for 26 EU Member States that contain specific goals on physical activity. For each document, the title, year of publication, coverage (national or subnational), issuing body and sector (public health, sport, transport, education and environment) are listed. Subnational policy documents were included if the National Information Focal Point indicated that the development of health policies was decentralized.

A total of 139 policy or legislative documents were identified, of which most were national documents. The exceptions were Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom, for which subnational policy documents were also included because of the decentralization of health policy in their political systems.

In terms of institutional involvement, for the greater part of the identified policy information, the health ministry was responsible for developing the policy and issuing the document. Other main issuing bodies were ministries concerned with social affairs, education, transport, environment and culture, and national institutes concerned with public health, nutrition, sport and physical activity.

Table 1. National policy documents of EU Member States that contain specific goals on the promotion of physical activity

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Austria	Fit for Austria Charter (16)	2007	National	Ministry of Sports; supported by Ministries of Education and Health	Sport, public health
Austria	Cycling master plan: strategy for the promotion of cycling traffic in Austria (17)	2006	National	Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water	Transport
Austria	Austrian strategy for sustainable development (18)	2002	National	Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water	Environment
Austria	Principle of health education (19)	1997	National	Ministry of Education	Education
Belgium	Flemish Draft Action Plan on Nutrition and Physical Activity 2008–2015 (20)	2008	Subnational	Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family	Public health
Belgium	Action plan sports for all for Flanders 2007–2009 (21)	2007	Subnational	Flemish Ministry of Sport	Sport
Belgium	National plan on nutrition and health 2005–2010 (22)	2006	National	Federal Public Health Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment	Public health
Belgium	Policy for promoting healthy nutritional habits and physical activity of children and adolescents (23)	2005	Subnational	Government of the French Community	Public health
Belgium	Cycling action plan for Brussels 2005–2009 (24)	2005	Subnational	Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Mobility	Transport
Belgium	Action plan to promote healthy dietary habits and regular physical activity (25)	2004	Subnational	Flemish Institute for Health Promotion	Public health
Bulgaria	National strategy for development of physical education and sport in Bulgaria 2010–2020 (26)	2010	National	Council of Ministers	Sport, education
Bulgaria	National programme of sport for all (27)	2009	National	Ministry of Physical Education and Sports	Public health
Bulgaria	National programme of sport for children in their free time (28)	2009	National	Ministry of Physical Education and Sports	Public health

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Bulgaria	National strategy and national programme for development of physical education and sports in Republic of Bulgaria, 2009–2013 (29)	2009	National	Council of Ministers	Sport, education
Bulgaria	National Strategy for Children 2008–2018 (30)	2008	National	State Agency for Child Protection	Children and young people
Bulgaria	National Health Strategy 2008–2013 (31)	2008	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Bulgaria	National Programme for Environmental Health 2008–2013 (32)	2008	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Bulgaria	National programme for the development of school education and preschool training and preparation 2006–2015 (33)	2006	National	Ministry of Education and Science	Education
Bulgaria	National Programme for Child Protection (34)	2006	National	Council of Ministers and State Agency for Child Protection	Children and young people
Bulgaria	National Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2005–2010 (35)	2005	National	Council of Ministers	Public health
Bulgaria	National strategy and national programme for development of physical education and sports in Republic of Bulgaria, 2005–2008 (36)	2005	National	Council of Ministers	Sport, education
Bulgaria	The Health Law (37)	First published 2004; updated 2008	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Bulgaria	Law for Physical Education and Sports (38)	First published 1996; updated 2008	National	Ministry of Physical Education and Sports	Sport, education
Cyprus	National Nutrition Action Plan (39)	2007	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Czech Republic	National cycling development strategy of the Czech Republic (40)	2005	National	Ministry of Transport	Transport
Czech Republic	National Programme of Sport Development for All (41)	2000	National	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	Sport
Czech Republic	Programme for Health Promotion (42)	2000	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Denmark	Nordic Plan of Action on better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity (43)	2006	National	Nordic Council of Ministers	Public health
Denmark	National action plan against obesity – recommendations and perspectives (44)	2003	National	National Board of Health	Public health

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Denmark	Better health for children and young people (45)	2003	National	Ministry of the Interior and Health	Public health
Denmark	Healthy throughout life – the targets and strategies for public health policy of the Government of Denmark, 2002–2010 (46)	2002	National	Ministry of the Interior and Health	Public health
Estonia	National Health Plan 2009–2020 (47)	2008	National	Ministry of Social Affairs	Public health
Estonia	Transport development plan 2006–2013 (48)	2006	National	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications	Transport
Estonia	Strategic development plan Sport for All 2006–2010 (49)	2006	National	Ministry of Culture	Sport
Estonia	Sport Act (50)	2005	National	Parliament	Sport
Estonia	National strategy for prevention of cardiovascular diseases 2005–2020 (51)	2005	National	Ministry of Social Affairs	Public health
Estonia	National traffic safety strategy 2003–2015 (52)	2003	National	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications	Transport
Estonia	Estonian Sports Charter (53)	2002	National	Ministry of Culture and Estonian Olympic Committee	Sport
Estonia	Public Health Act (54)	1995	National	Government of Estonia	Public health
Finland	Government resolution on development guidelines for health-enhancing physical activity and nutrition (55)	2008	National	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	Public health
Finland	Physical activity and well-being in Finland in the 2010s (56)	2008	National	Ministry of Education	Public health
Finland	Nordic Plan of Action on better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity (43)	2006	National	Nordic Council of Ministers	Public health
Finland	Promoting pedestrian and bicycle traffic in Finland, the JALOIN programme 2001–2004 (57)	2005	National	Ministry of Transport and Communications	Transport
France	Nutrition and physical activity in schools (58)	2009	National	Ministry of Education; supported by Ministry of Health and Sports and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries	Public health
France	Charter to promote healthy diet and physical activity in television programmes (59)	2009	National	Ministry of Health and Sports	Public health
France	Second national action plan environment and health 2009–2013 (60)	2009	National	Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea	Environment
France	National plan on disease prevention through physical activity and sport (61)	2008	National	Ministry of Health, Youth, Sport and Associations	Public health
France	Second national programme on nutrition and health 2006–2010 (62)	2006	National	Ministry of Health and Solidarity	Public health

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
France	National Plan on Healthy Ageing 2007–2009 (63)	2005	National	Ministry of Health and Solidarity	Public health
France	Sedentariness and physical inactivity (64)	2003	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
France	National programme for nutrition and health 2001–2005 (65)	2001	National	Ministry for Employment and Welfare; supported by Ministry of Health	Public health
Germany	IN FORM – Germany's initiative for a healthy nutrition and more physical activity (66)	2008	National	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and Ministry of Health	Public health
Germany	National Strategy for the Promotion of Child Health (67)	2008	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Germany	National action plan for a child-friendly Germany 2005–2010 (68)	2005	National	Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth	Public health
Germany	National Cycling Plan 2002–2012 "Ride your bike!" (69)	2002	National	Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing	Transport
Greece	No national policy has been developed yet	–	–	–	–
Hungary	National Youth Strategy 2009–2024 (70)	2009	National	Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs	Children and young people
Hungary	National Sport Strategy, Parliament Resolution (71)	2007	National	Sport State Secretariat of the Ministry of Local Government	Sport
Hungary	Parliamentary Resolution 47/2007 (V.31) OGY on the National Strategy 2007–2032 to improve the situation of children (72)	2007	National	Parliament	Public health
Hungary	Cycling Hungary Programme 2007–2013 (73)	2007	National	Ministry of Economy and Transport	Transport
Hungary	"Johan Bela" National Programme for the Decade of Health (74)	2003	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Hungary	Act on Public Education (75)	1993	National	Parliament	Education
Ireland	National Men's Health Policy 2008–2013 (76)	2008	National	Ministry of Health and Children	Public health
Ireland	The National Health Promotion Strategy 2000–2005 (77)	2000	National	Ministry of Health and Children	Public health
Italy	Gaining health (78)	2007	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Italy	National plan for prevention 2005–2007 (79)	2005	National	Council of Ministers	Public health
Italy	National health plan 2003–2005 (80)	2003	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Latvia	National sports development programme 2006–2012 (81)	2006	National	Cabinet of Ministers	Sport
Latvia	Sport policy guidelines 2004–2009 (82)	2004	National	Cabinet of Ministers	Sport
Latvia	Public Health Strategy (83)	2001	National	Cabinet of Ministers	Public health
Lithuania	State Physical Education and Sport Strategy (draft) (84)	2010	National	Government of Lithuania	Public health

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Lithuania	Law on Physical Education and Sports (85)	First published 1995; updated 2008	National	Parliament	Sport, education
Luxembourg	Action plan for human-powered mobility (86)	2008	National	Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of Interior and Spatial Planning	Transport
Luxembourg	Action plan for the promotion of healthy nutrition and physical activity (87)	2006	National	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Family and Integration and Ministry of Sports	Public health
Malta	A strategy for the prevention of non-communicable diseases in Malta (88)	2010	National	Department of Health	Public health
Malta	Together for a sustainable future. Chapter 9. Investing in our children's education (89)	2009	National	Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment	Sport
Malta	Reshaping sports – towards personal development, health and success. A medium-term strategic plan for enhancing sports culture in Malta 2007–2010 (90)	2007	National	Maltese Sports Council and Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment	Sport
Malta	Draft National Environment and Health Action Plan 2006–2010 (91)	2006	National	Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care	Environment
Malta	Sports Act, Chapter 455 (92)	2003	National	Government of Malta	Sport
Netherlands	Memorandum on obesity – out of balance: the burden of obesity (93)	2010	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Public health
Netherlands	National Action Plan for Sport and Exercise (94)	2006	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Sport
Netherlands	Sport action plan against obesity (95)	2005	National	Netherlands Olympic Committee and Netherlands Sport Federation	Sport
Netherlands	Time for sport: exercise, participate, perform (96)	2005	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Sport
Netherlands	Covenant on overweight and obesity, a balance between eating and physical activity (97)	2005	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Public health
Netherlands	National Plan of Action for Children 2004 (98)	2004	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Public health
Netherlands	Living longer in good health, also a question of a healthy lifestyle (99)	2004	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Public health
Netherlands	Towards an active policy (100)	2003	National	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Sport
Poland	National Health Programme 2007–2015 (101)	2007	National	Council of Ministers	Public health



Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Poland	National prevention programme of overweight, obesity and noncommunicable diseases through diet, and physical activity improvement 2007–2016 (102)	2006	National	Ministry of Health and National Food and Nutrition Institute	Public health
Portugal	National programme against obesity 2005–2009 (103)	2005	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Portugal	National Sports for All Programme Mexa-Se (104)	2005	National	National Institute of Sports	Sport
Portugal	National Health Plan 2004–2010 (105)	2004	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Romania	Sport Law No. 69/2009 with further amendments and supplements (106)	2009	National	Parliament	Sport
Romania	Governmental Decision No. 1573/2004 for approval the List of 410 investment objectives of the Programme “Construction of sport facilities” published in the Official Journal of Romania, No. 902/2004 (107)	2004	National	Government of Romania	Sport
Slovakia	National obesity prevention programme (108)	2008	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Slovakia	Č.300/2008 Law on the organization and promotion of sport (109)	2008	National	Government of Slovakia	Sport
Slovakia	National programme for sport development (110)	2001	National	Government of Slovakia	Sport
Slovenia	National Health Enhancing Physical Activity Programme 2007–2012 (111)	2007	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Spain	Integrated Plan for the promotion of sports and physical activity in the Extremadura Region (112)	2009	Subnational	Council of Extremadura	Public health
Spain	Health Plan for the Extremadura Region 2009–2012 (113)	2009	Subnational	Council of Extremadura	Public health
Spain	Health Plan for the Region of Murcia 2010–2015 (114)	2009	Subnational	Council of Murcia	Public health
Spain	Integral Plan for Physical Activity and Sport Promotion (115)	2009	National	High Council for Sport	Sport
Spain	3rd Health framework for the Castilla and Leon Region (116)	2008	Subnational	Council of Castilla and Leon	Public health
Spain	2nd Health framework for the La Rioja Region 2009–2013 (117)	2008	Subnational	Council of La Rioja	Public health
Spain	Plan on prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases in the autonomous region of Valencia (118)	2007	Subnational	Council of Valencia	Public health
Spain	Plan on Physical Activity, Sport and Health in Catalonia (119)	2007	Subnational	Health Department and Sport Secretary	Public health, sport

Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
Spain	Integrated plan on cardiovascular diseases for the Extremadura Region 2007–2011 (120)	2006	Subnational	Council of Extremadura	Public health
Spain	Healthy Activities, Physical Activity and Feeding Programme (121)	2006	Subnational	Council of Galicia	Public health
Spain	Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Prevention of Obesity (122)	2005	National	Ministry of Health	Public health
Spain	Plan on promotion of physical activity and a balanced diet for the Andalusia Region (123)	2004	Subnational	Council of Andalusia	Public health
Sweden	Government Bill: future outdoor recreation, 2009/10:238 (124)	2010	National	Ministry of the Environment	Environment
Sweden	A renewed public health policy (125)	2008	National	Ministry of Health and Social Affairs	Public health
Sweden	Future travel and transport – infrastructure for sustainable growth (126)	2008	National	Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications	Transport
Sweden	Nordic Plan of Action on better health and quality of life through diet and physical activity (43)	2006	National	Nordic Council of Ministers	Public health
Sweden	Action Plan for healthy dietary habits and increased physical activity (127)	2005	National	National Institute of Public Health	Public health
Sweden	Sweden's environmental policy: Environmental Quality Objective 15 – A good built environment (128)	2005	National	Ministry of the Environment	Environment
Sweden	Sweden's new public health policy (129)	2002	National	National Institute of Public Health	Public health
Sweden	The will of sports (130)	First published 1995; updated 2005, 2009	National	Swedish Sport Confederation	Sport
Sweden	Physical education and health (131)	1995	National	Swedish National Agency for Education	Education
United Kingdom	Active Travel Strategy (132)	2010	Subnational	Department for Transport	Transport
United Kingdom	Cycling and Health: a Strategy for 2005–2008 and Action Plan for 2005–2006 (133)	2006	Subnational	Cycling England	Transport
United Kingdom	Transport Scotland, framework document (134)	2005	Subnational	Scottish Executive	Transport
United Kingdom	Healthy Ageing Action Plan for Wales (135)	2005	Subnational	Welsh Assembly Government	Public health
United Kingdom	Climbing Higher, the Welsh Assembly Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity (136)	2005	Subnational	Welsh Assembly Government	Sport
United Kingdom	Framework for the development of sport and physical activity (137)	2005	Subnational	Sports Council for Wales	Sport



Country	Title	Year of publication	Coverage	Issuing body	Sector
United Kingdom	Choosing Activity, a Physical Activity Action Plan (138)	2005	Subnational	Department of Health	Public health
United Kingdom	Making London a walkable city (139)	2004	Subnational	Transport for London	Transport
United Kingdom	The London Plan for Sport and Physical Activity (140)	2004	Subnational	Sport England London	Sport
United Kingdom	The Framework for sport in England (141)	2004	Subnational	Sport England	Sport
United Kingdom	The Future of Transport, a Network for 2030, White Paper (142)	2004	Subnational	Department for Transport	Transport
United Kingdom	Walking and Cycling: an Action Plan (143)	2004	Subnational	Department for Transport	Transport
United Kingdom	Travelling to school: an action plan, England (144)	2003	Subnational	Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills	Transport
United Kingdom	Let's make Scotland more Active: A Strategy for Physical Activity (145)	2003	Subnational	Physical Activity Task Force	Public health
United Kingdom	Improving Health in Scotland (146)	2003	Subnational	Scottish Executive	Public health
United Kingdom	Walking Northern Ireland, an Action Plan (147)	2003	Subnational	Department for Regional Development Roads Service	Transport
United Kingdom	Walking and cycling strategy for Wales (148)	2003	Subnational	Welsh Assembly Government	Transport
United Kingdom	Game Plan, strategy for delivering the governments sport and physical activity objectives (149)	2002	Subnational	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Sport
United Kingdom	Northern Ireland's road safety strategy 2002–2012 (150)	2002	Subnational	Department of the Environment	Transport
United Kingdom	Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy (151)	2002	Subnational	Welsh Assembly Government	Public health
United Kingdom	Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone. The Government's road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for 2010 (152)	2000	Subnational	Department for Transport	Transport
United Kingdom	Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy (153)	2000	Subnational	Department for Regional Development Roads Service	Transport
United Kingdom	The Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy Action Plan 1998–2002 (154)	1998	Subnational	Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland	Public health

Main focus of the policies

The main focus of the policy documents was not always solely physical activity but also nutrition, obesity, cardiovascular disease prevention, public health, sustainable development or environmental health. The extent to which physical activity was addressed in the policy document depended on the type of document. In public health strategies, for instance, physical activity is mostly described in more general terms, while in policy documents that purely focused on physical activity a much more in-depth description was given.

Of the 26 countries for which information was available, 24 had at least one national policy document that took a *public health* policy approach. In all, 73 documents addressing physical activity and public health were identified, including:

- documents focusing purely on physical activity and health, such as the Slovenian National Health Enhancing Physical Activity Programme 2007–2012 (111) and the Plan on Physical Activity, Sport and Health in Catalonia (119).
- documents in which physical activity is part of an overarching public health strategy, such as in Denmark (Healthy throughout life 2002–2010) (46), Estonia (National Health Plan 2009–2020) (47) and France (National nutrition and health programmes 2001–2005 (65) and 2006–2010 (62));
- documents on lifestyles combining nutrition and physical activity, for example the Belgian Action Plan to promote healthy dietary habits and regular physical activity (25), the German IN FORM initiative to promote healthy nutrition and more physical activity (66) and the Luxembourg Action plan for the promotion of healthy nutrition and physical activity (87); and
- documents in which physical activity is part of an obesity strategy, such as in the Netherlands (Memorandum on obesity) (93) and Portugal (National programme against obesity 2005–2009) (103).

Thirty-four documents issued by 16 countries took a *sport-related* approach to physical activity promotion. For example, the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport developed a National Programme of Sport Development for All (41), the Cabinet of Ministers in Latvia adopted a National sports development programme 2006–2012 (81) and the Spanish High Council for Sport introduced an Integral Plan for Physical Activity and Sport Promotion (115).

For 10 countries, policy information on physical activity and *transport* (22 documents) was identified. The United Kingdom, for example, indicated many subnational transport-related documents, including Transport Scotland (134), Travelling to school – an action plan for England (144) and Walking and cycling strategy for Wales (148).



Five countries (9 documents) provided policy information that set out goals on *physical education*. An example is the Hungarian Act on Public Education (75), which includes a compulsory minimum level of physical education as part of the education programme.

For only four countries (Austria, France, Malta and Sweden) was a document on physical activity and the *environment* identified. Examples are the Austrian strategy for sustainable development (18) and the French Second national action plan on environment and health (60).

Two policy documents from Bulgaria (30, 34) and one from Hungary (70), which can be described as national programmes for children and/or young people, could not be categorized into the five sectors (see Box 1).

In comparison to the amount of public health related policy documents that have been identified, not many sport, transport, education and environment related physical activity promotion policy documents have been identified. This is most likely due to the fact that the information collected in this review mainly comes from counterparts from the Ministry of Health, meaning that policies developed in other sectors might be underreported.

Box 1. Different sectors engaged in the promotion of physical activity

Public health

Engaging in regular physical activity has many health benefits. In relation to that, the public health sector has a key leadership role to play in developing policies and partnerships for promoting physical activity for health.

Transport

Transport settings can provide excellent opportunities for achieving the recommended daily amount of physical activity for health. Transport-related policy documents can, for example, promote cycling and walking opportunities and address the safety needs of cyclists and pedestrians.

Environment

The physical environment can facilitate or constrain physical activity and active living. Environment-related policy documents can include ways in which the environment can facilitate increased participation in physical activity, such as the promotion of mixed land use and the development of urban planning strategies that support physical activity.

Sport

The sports sector forms the context for leisure time physical activity for many people, and contributes greatly to the number of people meeting the recommendations for physical activity. Policy documents issued by the sports sector contribute to shaping the right conditions for participating in sports and thus for engaging in a more active life.

Education

The education sector can contribute to increasing levels of physical activity by, for example, setting standards for physical education in schools, creating a school environment that encourages physical activity and promoting the inclusion of physical activity in school policies.

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe (6).

Coordinating mechanisms

Countries were asked to report on the existence of a specific national coordinating mechanism (working group, advisory body, coordinating institution, etc.) in the area of physical activity promotion. Table 2 provides an overview of the current coordinating mechanisms in place, the institution that is leading this mechanism and the participating stakeholders, which can be representatives from various public and private sectors.



Table 2. National coordinating mechanisms on the promotion of physical activity

Country	Coordinating mechanism in place	Leading institution	Participating stakeholders
Austria	Yes, since 2009	Ministry of Sport	Government departments on sport, education and health
Belgium	Yes, since 2005	Federal Public Service of Public Health, Food Safety and Environment (working group of National Food and Health Plan provided guidelines for physical activity)	Government departments on health, sport, education and research
Bulgaria	Yes, since 2005	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science and State Agency of Youth and Sports	Government departments on health, sport, education and research; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); academia; communities; private sector; media
Cyprus	Yes, since 2005	Ministry of Health	Government departments on health, food, sport, education and research; NGOs; academia; private sector; media
Czech Republic	No	–	–
Denmark	No	–	–
Estonia	Yes, since 2006	Ministry of Culture	Government departments on health, development, sport, education and research; NGOs; academia; communities; private sector; media
Finland	Yes, since 2008	Council of Physical Activity Promotion	Government departments on health, sport, transport, education and research
France	Yes, since 2001	Ministry of Health and Sports	Government departments on health, agriculture, food, finance, trade and economy, consumer affairs, sport, education and research, social welfare; NGOs; academia; civil society; communities; private sector
Germany	Yes, since 2007	Federal Ministry of Health and Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection	Government departments on health, agriculture, food, consumer affairs, sport, transport, urban planning, education and research, social welfare, labour, culture; NGOs; academia; civil society; communities; private sector
Greece	No	–	–
Hungary	Yes ^a	Ministry of Local Government	Government departments on health, sport, transport; NGOs; civil society
Ireland	Yes, since 2009	Department of Health and Children	Government departments on health, agriculture, food, trade and economy, sport, transport, urban planning, social welfare, education and research, labour, culture; NGOs; academia; private sector
Italy	No	–	–
Latvia	Yes, since 2003	Ministry of Education and Science	Government departments on health, finance, education and welfare; NGOs; academia

Country	Coordinating mechanism in place	Leading institution	Participating stakeholders
Lithuania	Yes, since 2002	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior and Department on Physical Education and Sports	Government departments on health, food, sport, urban planning, education and research, social welfare; NGOs; Sport for All Association; academia; civil society; communities; media
Luxembourg	Yes, since 2007	Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Health	Government departments on health, food, sport, urban planning, education and research, social welfare; NGOs; academia; civil society; communities; media
Malta	Yes, since 2003	Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate	Government departments on health, sport, education, youth; academia; local government; Malta Olympic Committee and Education
Netherlands	Yes, since 2003	National Institute for Sports and Physical Activity	Government departments on health, food, sport, transport, education and research, labour; academia; communities
Poland	Yes ^a	Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Sport for All Department	Government departments on sport, health, education; academia; research institutes NGOs; communities
Portugal	Yes ^a	National Institute for Sport	Government departments on sport
Romania	Yes, since 2000	National Authority for Youth and Sport	Government departments on education, research, youth and sport; Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee
Slovakia	Yes, since 2001	Ministry of Education	Government departments on health, food, sport, transport, education and research, labour; academia; communities
Slovenia	Yes, since 2007	Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Sport	Government departments on health, sport, transport, education, research
Spain	Yes, since 2001	Spanish Food Safety and Nutrition Agency (Ministry of Health and Social Policy)	Government departments on health, agriculture, food, consumer affairs, sport, education and research, and social welfare; academia; civil society; communities (regional councils); private sector; media
Spain	Yes, since 1990	High Council for Sports	Government departments on sport, health, urban planning, education, transport, social welfare, research; communities (regional councils); civil society; private sector
Sweden	Yes, since 2001	Swedish National Public Health Institute and Swedish National Centre for Child Health Promotion	Government departments on health and sport; NGOs; communities; private sector
United Kingdom	Yes, since 2008	Cross-government Physical Activity Programme Board	Government departments on health, culture, media, sport, communities and local government, children, schools and families, transport, environment

^a Since when not stated.

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Joint WHO/EC DG SANCO project: Monitoring progress on improving nutrition and physical activity and preventing obesity in the European Union (EU), 2008-2010

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